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# Women Encouraged to Take the *Stage*



**A hundred female students attend a USAID-sponsored forum where female judges served as panelists to share their real-life experiences and encourage young law students to join the judicial *Stage* program.**

Afghanistan is making strides toward increasing the participation of women in the public sphere, especially in the justice sector. Recently, one hundred females, all in their final year of studies in the Law and *Shari'a* faculties at Kabul University, attended a USAID-organized forum designed to encourage female law students to enroll in the upcoming *Stage*, the Supreme Court's judicial training program the event.

The forum featured all-female panelists, which included two senior-level Supreme Court judges and two second-year *Stage* students, all of whom shared their experiences about the rewards and challenges of serving in a male-dominated judiciary. The panelist judges encouraged the young females to participate more actively in Afghanistan's legal system and served as living examples of the inspiring role women can play in it. They shared information about the process of enrolling in the *Stage*, as well as practical tips on seeking appointments as judges after completing the training program. Meanwhile, the student panelists shared experiences about the benefits of the theoretical and practical training they receive at the *Stage* and their post-graduate career plans.

Prior to attending the forum, many female students were reluctant to consider joining the judiciary. However, after attending the event, Khateria Starzada, a final-year *Shari'a* student, remarked, "I used to be afraid of considering a career as a judge because I heard that there were many threats and obstacles posed to women judges. But, after hearing female judges speak about their experiences, I am no longer afraid. On the contrary, I am even more interested in this profession."

USAID's Afghanistan Rule of Law Stabilization Program-Formal Component works with state institutions to build the capacity of the judiciary and law schools, strengthen public legal awareness, and increase stability through support of the informal justice system.